DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 326 346 RC 017 831

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TITLE The Application of Community Development Principles and Methods to Successful Rural Development Projects: Few Case Studies from Ethiopia.
PUB DATE Jul 89
NOTE 23p.; Revised version of a paper presented at the 20th Anniversary Conference of the Community Development Society of America (St. Louis, MO, July 23-27, 1989).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Community Benefits; Community Cooperation; *Community Development; *Community Programs; *Developing Nations; Economic Development; *Human Resources; *Organizational Development; Program Development; Quality of Life; Rural Development; *Social Development
IDENTIFIERS Ethiopia

ABSTRACT

This paper argues that the goal of community development should be to provide more than material gains such as fast economic growth. The paper provides two case studies from Ethiopia which demonstrate how proper implementation of community development processes and principles might lead to successful attainment of tangible and intangible development goals. During the past two decades, there has been growing doubt about the efficacy of community development. The criticism is often based on the notion that community development is designed to produce only tangible results or material progress. Intangible objectives might include social and psychological development, human resource development, or institutional development. Certain key elements or principles of community development are described and it is noted that if these are observed, they will make successful implementation of a development program more attainable. The formation of a community development association and the development of a small cooperative store and weaving industry are described. These two cases, both from Ethiopia, are offered to demonstrate community development's potential for the third world. (TES)

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The Application of Community Development Principles and Methods to Successful Rural Development Projects: Few Case Studies from Ethiopia

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RC 017831

ABSTRACT

Over the past two decades there has been growing doubts about the efficacy of community development. The criticism is often based on the notion that community development is designed to produce tangible results or material gains such as economic growth in short periods of time. However there is little attention given, if any at all, to the essential principles and processes which can facilitate successful results. This paper presents the argument that the goal of community development is something more than material progress per se, and provides case studies which clearly demonstrate how proper implementation of its processes and principles would lead to successful attainment of its goals and objectives. The case studies further demonstrate that community development has tremendous potential for third world development.

The Application of Community Development Principles and Methods to Successful Rural Development Projects; Few Case Studies from Ethiopia

Since the late 1960's there has been a growing disillusionment with community development. The reasons for the growing disenchantment are associated with, but not limited to, the following factors. First and foremost there is considerable ambiguity and misunderstanding about what community development really is. Second, and perhaps as a result of this, policy makers, program managers, and potential beneficiaries have been disappointed with it, because their expectation to find tangible results in the short run, with a quick fix approach to vexing and long term problems could not be realized. In general there has been a tendency to view the program as a vehicle for achieving certain specific (tangible) goals without paying attention to the essential processes. Third, some social scientists have accentuated the problem by making premature declaration that the program has failed, perhaps without careful evaluation of the evidence and sufficient justification. As a result of these, other development schemes with new labels but not novice substance have emerged in the meantime. Integrated Rural Development in the 1970's, Popular Participation, Basic Needs Approach, and Regional Development Projects during the last two decades are cases in point. However, these approaches did not really represent new ideas substantially different from community development, but they were new labels for the same old idea.

In short, much of the criticisms which were leveled against community development were, by and large, misplaced criticisms, because the alleged failures or set-backs of the program were largely due to political and bureaucratic constraints and the misapplication of community development principles as opposed to inherent weakness of the concept. The purpose of this paper is to highlight the salient principles and methods of community development and show how paying sufficient attention to these principles and methods can lead to successful implementation of the program. A few case studies from Ethiopia will be

presented to demonstrate how proper application of community development principles can produce successful results.

Definition of the Concept

One of the fundamental problems of community development is the wide varieties of meanings which are ascribed to it. This in part seems to arise from the diversity of the practice settings to which it can be applied and practitioners' value preference and philosophical orientation. This is ironically both its strength and weakness. Despite this limitation however, careful examination of some of the earlier definitions show the key elements which really capture the true essence of community development. For instance, the original short definition which was formulated by the Ashridge Conference in 1954, (Du Sautoy, 1958), defines community development as follows:

> A movement designed to promote better living for the whole community with the active participation and, if possible, on the initiative of the community, but if this initiative is not forthcoming spontaneously, by the use of techniques for arousing and stimulating it in order to secure the active and enthusiastic response to the movement.

There are four salient features of this definition, which incorporate the key elements and related principles of community development. These are: 1) it involves voluntary grass roots mobilization, 2) the goal is to develop local capability and to promote better living for the whole community, 3) active citizen participation is a potent vehichle for mobilzing the community in order to promote improved standard of living, and 4) some guidance and encouragement may be necessary to facilitate the process. These more or less represent the basic distinguishing characteristics of community development as the following discussion would indicate.

Salient Principles of Community Development

As the preceding definition indicates there are certain key elements or principles of community development. These are (1) community, (2) planned goal, (3) active community participation, and (4) relevant program.

Community

A community is the fundamental basis of community development. The concept of community development presupposes the existence of a group of people in specific location who maintain meaningful social interaction guided by a set of values and norms which they share in common (Christenson and Robinson, 1980). They also have a sense of belonging or some kind of psychological attachment or bonding to the locality and among themselves.[1] As the definition suggests the whole community is the focus of community development. This is not an arbitrary decision but a conscious and deliberate choice. That is, the community is both the object and the instrument of development. Thus the approach is holistic in the sense that it aims to address a wide spectrum of various community needs as well as to mobilize a broad cross section of the community in the process. This approach is selected in order to achieve the following broad objectives of community development. These are to:

1. Encourage concerted local initiatives and to develop leadership capability to tackle local problems;
2. Encourage mutual interdependence and to strengthen community solidarity based on mutual respect and reciprocity and cooperative coexistence;
3. Encourage self reliance and to develop some degree of self sufficiency through cooperative undertaking;
4. Encourage the development of viable local social and economic organizations;

5. Facilitate equitable distribution of opportunities for growth and development within the community.

These objectives are really attainable provided that the whole community works together harmoniously and peacefully as a team. In other words, maintaining the organic structure or unity of the community is important both in mobilizing a concerted effort to tackle local problems and in developing local capability in the future. In short, the entire community is the heart and soul of the community development process.

Goal

There are certain broad set of goals which community development is designed to achieve. Generally it aims to bring about an overall development in local capability and improvement in the standard of living for the whole community. These may include creating better conditions to satisfy various aspects of life needs such as economic, social, cultural, psychological and political needs,[2] etc. To be specific these can be divided into: (1) tangible, and (2) intangible or sometimes referred to as task and process goals (Christenson and Robinson, 1980; Rothman, 1979) respectively. The former focuses on the accomplishment of certain specific sets of concrete results while the latter puts more emphasis on developing institutionalized procedures or methods of problem solving so as to increase the community's opportunity to learn from experience and as a result grow and develop its capability.

The intangible goal can be further divided into other specific goals. These may include but not be limited to: (1) social and psychological development, (2) human capability development, and (3) institutional and organizational development. Social and psychological development goals may include things such as developing local initiatives and will power to take some responsibility, building a sense of fulfillment and self confidence with the resultant increase in the community's self esteem. As a result negative psychological inertias such as ignorance, apathy and the feeling of hopelessness can be removed from the minds of the people. Thus one of the primary objectives of such a goal is to make the citizen realize how

much they can do for themselves, even if it means very little initially, only if they can work together in concert according to their ability. Such change in attitude combined with some accomplishment would be a tremendous source of positive self esteem and motivation to take additional initiatives in the future (McClleland, 1961, 1971).

The goal for developing human capability may include many things such as increasing the level of community members' knowledge and skills, through introducing new ideas and experience, expanding education, and tapping and developing latent community resources such as local talents and skills. Cumulative improvement in this area is an essential precondition for progress and development. Finally institutional development will involve such things as developing local initiatives, if possible spontaneous initiatives, building and developing leadership capability, and developing viable social and economic organizations and corresponding institutions such as educational, economic, local self-government, etc.

In contrast to the intangible goals, the tangible goal would put more emphasis on achieving certain concrete results. Increasing the level of economic growth, improved infrastructure like building roads, bridges, railroads and other transport and communication facilities are good examples. Consciously or unconsciously, this goal is often emphasized, sometimes at the virtual exclusion of the other goals by policy makers and practitioners alike. The temptation to accomplish concrete results in a short time is so great that there is a tendency to perceive community development in this light.

Unfortunately, such preoccupation with material gains creates the illusion that community development is designed to offset the shortage of material products or to produce increased supply of goods and services. Most of the criticisms against it seem to be associated with this notion as the evaluation of its impact is often based on the assessment of the quantity of tangible products such as economic growth, agricultural production, miles of roads constructed, number of water wells sunk, number of clinics built, and etc. Although these are relevant indices of development, they are not a sufficient measure of it. In addition to these, what really happens to the human aspect of development, i.e. the degree of social,

psychological and institutional development needs careful consideration as well. There is little chance that sustained supply of goods and services can be made available without corresponding improvement in these factors. Ultimately the people must be responsible for themselves. Community development provides them with the opportunity to work together and gain the necessary experience and develop the initiative and the leadership which is necessary to meet their needs.

Finally, the two sets of goals are not incompatible. They are closely interrelated and they can be achieved simultaneously. The active participation of the community in the process of defining its needs, decision making, and organizing to produce goods and services will afford the members ample opportunities to gain real and useful life experience. As a result they may be able to develop new insight, change attitudes, gain self confidence, and develop the initiative to take more and more responsibilities for themselves. Subsequently they may be able to develop their capability to the point that they can meet their needs more effectively. Thus in the long run the degree to which the intangible goals are met may prove to be a reliable indicator of the level of development of the community (Biddle and Biddle, 1965).

Method

What are the ways, means or methods by which the goals of community development can be achieved? To achieve the stated goals community development basically utilizes certain coherent steps of the problem solving process with heavy reliance on active community participation in the the process. For the purpose of this paper there are about six logical steps of the problem solving process. These are: (1) problem definition; (2) decision making/goal setting; (3) determination of means (resources); (4) program planning; (5) implementation; and (6) evaluation.[3] These steps constitute an integrated model of the problem solving process. Active and broad community participation is an essential component of the problem solving process. Direct and active community participation is

essential in order to: (1) facilitate appropriate problem diagnosis and need assessment; (2) enhance sound and feasible decision making; (3) increase the chances of appropriate program design and successful implementation; and (4) to foster meaningful learning experience for the participants from thereof, and improve their knowledge and skills and bring about changes in attitudes.[4]

Through their participation in problem definition members of the community can provide a wide range of first-hand information with which both the nature and the scope of the problem can be properly assessed. Similarly their participation in group discussion can engender cross fertilization of diverse and imaginative ideas out of which novel ideas may emerge. Likewise their participation in exploring alternative solutions to the problem can lead to sound decisions regarding the choice of relevant and feasible goals. Various decision making techniques such as the Delphi (Lauffer, 1978) and Decision Criteria Matrix (Abatena, 1990) can be used to guide the decision making process. In addition to these their participation can favorably influence the program planning and implementation phase. They can help to identify the activities, tasks, or program contents which are necessary to organize and implement the program. They can also mobilize necessary community resources to implement the program, and they can share or take the responsibility to accomplish various essential tasks. All in all the community can be the primary instrument of the process as well as its beneficiary. The degree to which this can be achieved will depend on how much involvement and responsibility the community is given, and on the amount of guidance and encouragement the community organizer may give them. Thus the policy makers and the community development agent (organizer) have a major responsibility to facilitate the process and make the program workable.

Program

What are the essential means which are required by the community to achieve community development goals and objectives? Broadly speaking the community will need

organizations and resources to achieve such goals. Social organizations consist of social system structures with a well defined division of responsibilities and set of norms to plan and execute the activities or tasks which are necessary to achieve the goals and objectives the community has selected.

Resources will include human, material and financial assets which are necessary to accomplish the essential tasks. Resources can be mobilized both from within the community and external sources. One of the cardinal principles of community development is to encourage fuller utilization of available community resources. This is done for the primary purpose of encouraging self reliance as far as possible. Fundamentally this is advisable for a number of reasons. First every community has some limited amount of resources such as talents, skills, leadership, human energy, and financial and material resources regardless of how small it may be. Full and efficient utilization of these resources will enable the community to tackle its problem/s and appreciate what it is capable of doing for itself. As a result, they will gain some self confidence and may acquire the motivation to do more in the future. Second, this will progressively reduce their dependence on others and eventually remove lethargic forces such as apathy and ignorance. Third, fuller and efficient utilization of internal resources will enable the community to make similar utilization of external resources if and when it becomes available. This is quite important for no amount of external resource will make the community effective regardless of how large that may be, unless it already knows how to manage efficiently what is available to it. In short the community needs to learn to make efficient use of its own resources and appreciate its own capability before it can look for help from elsewhere.

Sometimes the community needs external assistance to supplement what it already has. This may come in terms of technical assistance such as expert guidance and innovation as well as material and financial assistance when deemed necessary. The primary purpose of such assistance must be to complement internal resources and to encourage local initiatives in undertaking programs and activities which can benefit local communities. That is, it is

meant to stimulate community self help through the provision of things which they may need but cannot get (Mukerji, 1961). In addition to this it is meant to provide a demonstration effect for groups and communities who may not realize the availability of such assistance.

Finally, it is worthy to note that inasmuch as such assistance is intended to encourage local self help the form and the manner in which it is given, as well as the amount and timing, are all quite important. Neither too little nor too much is good to give. Too little will fail to meet what is actually needed. As a result the people will be frustrated and their feelings of hopelessness and apathy may be reinforced. Too much may engender the wasting of scarce resources, and the community may not cherish or appreciate the value of such assistance. Furthermore, the community may take such aid for granted and as a result develop a tendency to become increasingly dependent on external assistance. As far as the form is concerned, things given in solid cash will usually create the temptation of misusing it. To prevent this it is advisable to provide in kind assistance such as technical help and/or material assistance. Similarly timing is quite important. Things given too late after it has been requested may not be of much value to the community. This is especially true of assistance given to farmers as timing is quite important in their activities. For instance there is no use giving them seeds or fertilizer after the planting date has passed.

To summarize, the preceding discussions clearly show how it is important to observe certain principles of community development so that successful implementation of the program can be attained. The following case studies[5] in rural development from Ethiopia clearly demonstrate the point.

Case Studies

In the following section we will present two selected case studies as an illustration of viable communal self help organizations which have made successful use of community development principles. The cases are: (1) the Tula Community self help project, and (2) the

Gurage community's "From Alemgana to Walamo-Sodo Road Construction Association." The first one is a locality based rural organization which, perhaps, derives its origin from strong community solidarity and experience with rural self help associations. In sharp contrast, the second one is an urban association which emerged from strong ethnic solidarity and extensive experience with urban based self help association.

Tula Community Self Help Project

Tula is a small village community of about fifty households about 20 kilometers (12.5 miles) from the city of Awasa in the Sidamo Governorate General and about 290 kilometers (181 miles) south of Addis Ababa.

The people of this community have for long depended on the city of Awasa to obtain basic household supplies such as table salt, coffee, cooking oil, kerosine and etc. In order to procure these supplies the residents had to walk about 40 kilometers (25 miles) roundtrip. Thanks to some fortunate events and the leadership of the community things started to change for the better in the years 1962-63. A community development trainee from the nearby Awasa Community Development Workers Training and Demonstration Center was assigned to work with the community as part of his internship training. One of the projects that he started to work on was the small household supply store in the community. Through a dialogue with the community leaders an idea was presented about the possibility of opening a small consumer cooperative store to stock basic household supplies to benefit the membership. The idea instantly caught fire as the leadership was readily receptive to it.[6] A general meeting of the community members was called and the idea was presented to them. The group discussed the issue and decided to go along with the idea and explore further various possibilities for raising the initial investment capital. As a result of this discussion it was decided that selected and representative young and adult members of the community should go and work on the nearby Awasa farm -- (a large scale public commercial undertaking) for a couple of days and earn wages to raise the necessary seed capital. This

was implemented and the essential capital was raised. Subsequently the store was stocked with essential supplies and opened its door to the community.[7] The operation of the store was jointly supervised by one of the community leaders and the community development worker. The worker initially helped to set up the bookkeeping system and trained the store worker to eventually take over.

Although the price of the commodities sold to the community members was reasonably low it became a profitable venture for the group. As a result of this successful experience the group's motivation became stronger to explore further community projects. Subsequently they decided to build a community hall to accommodate their meetings and other public gatherings. After a successful completion of this project they decided to embark upon a cooperative house building project. An agreement was made to build a house for each of the community members that needed such housing through joint resource mobilization. Thus, while the individual family provided necessary matêrials according to its capability, the community provided the rest and labor. The order in which a house was to be built for each of the members was determined by the meeting of the council of community elders which was conducted according to the local Gada System.[8] One of the major criteria that the elders used to determine the order was the families' need. This project was successfully implemented. Furthermore, the council had the responsibility to formulate policy, to provide guidance, and to settle disputes among the community members (Hamer, 1987).

The next project that the community undertook and implemented was the cooperative organization of the local cottage industry -- which was mainly weáving local clothes. Following this, the community decided to borrow the necessary capital to purchase a diesel engine flour mill. This was something they badly needed as the household members had to walk long distances carrying grains to the nearest privately operated mill. The community development worker in consultation with the department of cooperatives in the Ministry of National Community Development and Social Affairs in Addis Ababa helped the group to draw up the project plan and to prepare the loan application. The latter was submitted to the

Agricultural Development Bank which carefully reviewed the application and then approved the loan. The engine was bought and installed and the project was successfully implemented. The venture was so profitable that the community was able to pay back and cancel the debt within a few years and expand the business by purchasing and installing the second mill. The undertakings were registered as a bonafide cooperative society operated and managed on a self reliant basis with little guidance from the community development worker and the regional cooperative supervisor. The mills not only provided the community with new capital assets and employment opportunities but primarily helped to significantly reduce the burden of the households from carrying grain long distances for milling. Finally, the community established a local drug store and clinic to satisfy its primary health needs.

This case is a success story about how local community organizations can gradually evolve and grow over time to make the community relatively self reliant. It takes the right kind of leadership and community solidarity, will power and commitment, and proper encouragement and guidance by a technical agent to succeed in such an endeavor. Given this set of conditions, the replicability of this experience in other similar communities is quite high (Abatena, 1978; Biddle and Biddle, 1965; Dey, 1964; Raper, 1970).

The Gurage Community's "From Alemgana to Wolamo-Sodo Road Construction Self Help Association"

This is a self help mutual aid association of an ethnic community of the Gurages[9] who live in Addis Ababa and other major cities. Few elderly leaders of the community felt the need to organize in order to address some of the serious problems which their kins and fellow community members were facing in rural communities. Thus the association was borne out of a felt need and was organized to undertake various kinds of self help activities designed to promote local and regional development. The major goals of the association were to: (1) develop transport and communication networks in the region; (2) promote education, health,

and welfare; (3) promote economic development in the region; (4) control crime and promote peace and tranquility and organize local groups for initiating self help activities.[10]

The association had a very well defined organizational structure consisting of the board of supervisors, executive officers, and volunteer work teams and task forces. The board of supervisors, some of the executive officers, and work teams are all made up of volunteers selected or recruited from among the community members at large. One of the distinctive features of the association was the tapping and utilization of local talents and skills with as little cost as possible. The task forces or work teams were organized to undertake different kinds of activities such as data gathering and research, program planning, budgeting and fund raising. The community members were encouraged to give as much financial assistance as they could afford and their time freely whenever needed. They were also encouraged to regularly attend the weekly general meetings of the association during the weekend and actively participate. Part of the associations' revenue was eventually generated by various business activities such as the organization of a regular public transportation (bus) service to the Gurage and Walamo region.

Other achievements include the construction of an all-weather road of about 250 kilometers (156 miles) and of regional elementary and secondary school; the opening of local clinics and basic health care facilities; and the eradication of local bandits which used to menace the community. All in all the program is considered to be a success and this is attributed to the strong ethnic community solidarity, commitment and dedication, strong and dedicated leadership and the pooling of entrepreneurial talent which the association was able to tap from among its membership. In fact it became a model for many regional ethnic self help associations which emerged in its wake.

Social and Economic Significance of Self Help Organizations

The above case studies clearly point to the social and economic significance of grass roots social organizations. These have enabled the local communities to mobilize their

resources and tackle some of their major problems. In addition to mobilizing a cooperative labor force, such organizations have been instrumental in raising capital from local and extra-community sources. As a result the potential for the expansion of local business and the prospect for higher employment opportunities have increased. In other words, these organizations have helped to increase the community's access to reproduction assets like capital, labor, talent and organizational leadership and external services such as markets, innovations, etc., which are normally out of their reach.

As to the social significance of these organizations, they have enabled the communities to cultivate and foster a cooperative and collaborative spirit. By strengthening cooperative forces they have enabled the communities to develop a untied front in tackling local problems and in addressing community needs; and develop self confidence and eventually achieve a degree of self reliance. These can be seen as ideal goals for any community to attain.

Summary and Conclusion

The foregoing discussions clearly indicate that community development has tremendous potential for third world development. Proper implementation of its processes and principles such as organizing self help activities to adress the community's felt need, the rough active local participation in problem definition, decision making, program planning and implementation, would lead to successful attainment of its goals and objectives. In the short run it may be difficult to achieve significant tangible results such as increased economic growth. However in the long run it offers a better opportunity to build the institutions and the social infrastructures which are necessary to bring about meaningful socio-economic development. Particularly, it is an effective method for facilitating appropriate problem diagnosis, feasible decision making and successful program implementation. In short, given the opportunity and proper guidance and encouragement, local grass root community

organizations can be a viable alternative for bringing about socio-economic development in the third world.

Notes

1. Although the degree to which these features exist in a community may vary from place to place, it is indisputable that they exist in all communities regardless of whether it is urban or rural. An ideal example would be a rural village community where primary relationship is common. Following this a well integrated sub-urban neighborhood where people share common locality and common social and economic services, as well as shared value system is a close example. Mass society in the megalopolis tend to manifest least of these features.
2. The mistake is often made when the preoccupation with material conditions create the temptation to reduce community development goal to mere tangible outcomes or economic goals such increased income, higher agricultural production, more health facilities, etc. These are indeed noble goals. However, they are not sufficient to attain sustained development, unless and until there is corresponding improvement in social, cultural and psychological conditions. That is the community needs to develop new value systems, local initiatives and leadership capability in order to carry on sustainable level of development.
3. For a detailed discussion of the problem solving steps, refer to Abatena, H. and Teddlie, Charles B. "Rural School Planning in Louisiana: A Comparative Study and an Application of Theoretical Approaches." Socio-Economic Planning Sciences: An International Journal V. 20 No. 4 (Spring, 1986), pp. 261-2969.
4. The virtues of community participation in development is fully discussed in a manuscript entitled, "The Significance of Planned Community Participation in Problem Solving and Developing Community Capability," which I recently completed and is ready for submission to a journal for publication.

5. The case studies are reproduced from a previous publication by this author in the Journal of Rural Cooperation, V. 15 No. 2, 1987, under the title, "The Potential Contribution of Indigenous Self Help and Mutual Aid Organizations to the Socio-Economic Development of Ethiopia."

6. Interview with Ato Alebatchew Aberra, a village level community development worker who organized the group and worked with the same.

7. Interview with Ato Aberra and Ato Waqo who was an influential leader in the community. Most observers believe that Ato Waqo's wisdom, leadership experience, and dedication was instrumental to the progress and improvement achieved. At the time of both of these interviews this author was teaching at the nearby Community Development Workers Training and Demonstration Center in Awasa.

8. The Gada system is a traditional social and political organization of local community leaders among the Oromos of southern and southwestern Ethiopia. The system operates according to certain democratic principles. Membership and status in the organization is determined according to age and experience. For more detailed information about the Gada system see Legessee (1963) and Hamer (1987).

9. The Gurages' are an ethnic community of people who live in the southwestern part of south central Ethiopia, mainly the southwest part of the Governorate General of Shoa. Although the groups have somewhat similar cultural traits there are distinct subcultures, i.e. seven different clans within the groups. Some of their main characteristics are self disciplined behavior such as hard work and industriousness and thrift and strong entrepreneurial predisposition. Most of them are engaged in private business, commerce and trade. For more detailed discussion of the Gurages see Gadamu (1966) and Shack (1966).

10. Interview with Ato Brook, a knowledgeable community leader.

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Date Filmed

March 29, 1991